

# THE OCEAN RIGHTS DECLARATION

We, the undersigned, share our commitment to fostering an ethical relationship with the Ocean. We recognise the Ocean as one dynamic and interconnected being; a living entity vital to the health of the planet, the well-being of all species, and the survival of humanity itself.

We affirm that:

- The Ocean is more than a resource to be exploited, and is the lifeblood of the planet and source of life.
- Humanity exists as a part of the Earth community and our health, and the fulfilment of human and economic rights, are inseparably linked with the health and integrity of the Ocean.
- The Ocean has intrinsic, cultural and spiritual value and deserves protection for reasons beyond utility, whether economic or otherwise.
- The recognition of the Ocean's inherent rights and corresponding duties to safeguard them is one approach to respect and conserve the Ocean's intrinsic value, complementing a diversity of Indigenous, customary, and non-Western governance systems and worldviews that guide human–Ocean relationships around the world.
- Humanity has an individual and collective responsibility to minimise and prevent harm to marine ecosystems and species.
- The rights of coastal and Indigenous communities who are custodians of the Ocean on which they depend for their cultural, spiritual, and economic well-being must be respected, protected and elevated.

By joining the movement for Ocean Rights, the undersigned recognise and support the fundamental principles and actions necessary to uphold the Ocean's intrinsic value and ensure ethical Ocean governance. This includes:

- Advancing local, regional and international efforts to recognise and respect the inherent rights and intrinsic value of marine ecosystems and the species that inhabit them in alignment with relational, spiritual and customary frameworks.

- Encouraging equitable, systemic and ecologically sustainable practices that protect and preserve the Ocean from irreversible pollution and destruction, thus guaranteeing the rights of current and future generations, human and non-human alike.
- Acting as stewards and guardians of the Ocean by representing the Ocean's health and interests in decision making, policy development and disputes affecting its health.
- Supporting the development of inclusive governance systems for the Ocean, where Indigenous peoples, coastal communities, marginalised groups and all Ocean citizens can be a voice for the Ocean.
- Promoting the integration of scientific, Indigenous, and community-based knowledge, innovations and practices in policy decisions and actions that safeguard the Ocean, ensuring the approval and involvement of knowledge holders, safeguarding against co-optation, and fostering equitable benefit-sharing with the communities concerned.
- Holding States, private industries and individuals accountable for actions that harm the Ocean and advocate for restorative justice when damage is done.
- Raising awareness and educate others on the interconnected relationship humanity has with the Ocean, its critical role in maintaining planetary health and the threats it faces.
- Supporting actions to stem pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems, and respect planetary limits in order to guarantee a healthy and thriving Ocean.

While the undersigned may contribute to these efforts in different ways, we collectively acknowledge that these principles define an ethical human-Ocean relationship in practice, and commit to advancing and supporting them as a part of a broad and inclusive movement. We call upon others to join us in this shared responsibility.

\* The Declaration was finalised with the grateful feedback of Movement partners and supporters, including: Nature's Rights, Wild Legal, Stichting Rechten van de Natuur, Island Conservation, Jacqueline Evans, and Gallifrey Foundation.

